

## Sociology of Crime News Assignment

Crime reporting dominates the news. As we have discussed in class, news media generally distort the patterns of crime and criminality. In this course we will explore sociological research on the frequency of crime, the characteristics of offenders, and the theories explaining why crime occurs. One of my goals in this class is to help you become critical consumers of news. This assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to critically assess news reporting in light of the information and insights that you have learned in this class.

Throughout the semester, you should look for reports on crime in the news. Since all print, local and cable news outlets have an online component, you should easily be able to find online samples of recent stories from multiple websites. You will identify and analyze different news stories (or series or section) during the semester. You will post each instance on our class news blog and share with the rest of the class (link available on our class website – <http://crime.kimberlymbaker.com>).

For each entry:

1. Select 1 crime-related news story, series or section
2. Create an entry on the class blog
3. Give a link for the original news piece (may be text or video)
4. Briefly summarize the article (1-2 sentences)
5. Critically analyze some crime-related component of the article. Options for critical analysis include
  - a. Media's construction of crime, criminals and/or victims
  - b. Use of data about crime, criminals and/or victims
  - c. Alternative explanations for crime, crime rates, victimization
  - d. Connections between this piece and a reading/class discussion

### Grading

You may receive up to ten points total for each entry and you can earn up to 100 points on this assignment. Individual blog entries will be scored as follows: 10 points – reserved for instances of seemingly exceptionally conscientious or insightful engagement of course material; 8-9 – good job - this will be the default and modal grade for a solidly done reaction; 6-7 – reaction did not evidence engagement with the readings at quite the expected level; 5 or less – worth partial credit, but a superficial or otherwise inadequate.

### Additional Guidelines

1. Each entry must be a minimum of 400 words
2. Your news piece must come from a legitimate news source (not *The Onion*, *The Enquirer*, etc.). If you are uncertain of the legitimacy, check with me first!
3. You must explicitly reference course materials
  - a. You will need to include an embedded citation (such as date of lecture or author of reading)
  - b. Bibliographic information is required if you reference outside material
4. Your writing may be conversational, but you should also strive to be clear (see grading notes below)
5. The news story must have been published within the two weeks of your entry
6. You cannot use the same news story as someone else (sometimes multiple news outlets rely on a single source - such as the AP - so be careful to check what your classmates are responding to)
7. You should spread these entries out over the semester. So...
  - a. You can receive credit for up to 2 entries in a single week, but no more
  - b. Only 1 entry can be posted after April 20
8. You may receive credit toward participation for commenting on other people's entries